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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Situation of human rights in Albania

Report of the Secretary-General submitted pursuant to Commission on Human Rights resolution 1992/69

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Introduction

1. At its forty-eighth session, the Commission on Human Rights adopted, on 4 March 1992, resolution 1992/69 entitled "Situation of human rights in Albania", the operative part of which reads as follows:

"The Commission on Human Rights,

...

1. Calls upon the Government of Albania to continue to adopt legislative and administrative measures to meet the requirements under the International Bill of Human Rights and other relevant international instruments, by which freedom, democracy and the rule of law will be established and the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Albanian citizens will be effectively promoted and protected;

2. Also calls upon the Government of Albania to respect the rights of persons belonging to minorities living in the country;

3. Emphasizes the need to guarantee the free expression of the will of the electors in the forthcoming elections and, in particular, the right of all Albanian citizens to form their own political parties, to stand for election and to vote;

4. Welcomes the conclusion, on 13 February 1992, of the Agreement on technical cooperation between the Centre for Human Rights and the United Nations Fund for Advisory Services and Technical Assistance in the field of Human Rights, on the one hand, and the Government of Albania, on the other;

5. Requests the Secretary-General:

(a) To bring the present resolution to the attention of the Government of Albania and to invite it to provide information regarding its implementation;

(b) To report to the Commission at its forty-ninth session on the implementation of the present resolution;

6. Decides to continue its consideration of the question at its forty-ninth session."

2. Pursuant to paragraph 5 (a) of Commission resolution 1992/69, on 21 July 1992 the Secretary-General addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania a note verbale in which he requested the Government of that country to communicate to him any information or observation it might wish to present in accordance with that resolution.

I. REPLY OF THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA

3. In response to that communication, on 28 January 1993 the Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Albania to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights a letter transmitting a document relating to the democratic process and the situation of human rights in Albania, updating the information communicated to the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights by the Minister for Foreign Affairs in two communications dated 2 and 22 July 1992. The document reads as follows:

"THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES AND THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ALBANIA

A. The democratic processes

4. The important democratic movements and, more particularly, the student movements in 1990 in Albania led to the fall of the communist dictatorship which had ruled for 45 years. The collapse of communism in Albania marked the beginning of a broad process of construction of a genuinely democratic society, based on free competition and respect for human rights. It should be noted that several political, economic and social changes have taken place in Albanian society since 1990. Albania has already shown its political orientation towards democracy; its increasingly active commitment to international processes, far-reaching political, economic and social reforms, its determination to respect and fulfil its commitments under the International Covenants and, more particularly, its determination to respect international human rights standards constitute genuine evidence of this orientation.

5. It is possible to gain a more precise idea of the results achieved by Albania since 1990 by taking account of what it inherited from communist rule. The communist regime in Albania, one of the harshest in Eastern and Central Europe, was characterized by flagrant and massive violations of human rights. The suppression of freedom of conscience, and refusal of the right to freedom of expression and organization assumed broad proportions. Albania has inherited a very weak economy from the old regime, which makes it difficult to implement reforms and, more particularly, to undertake economic reforms. However, Albania has now totally abandoned the communist path of development and has committed itself with determination to the building of a modern democracy.

6. The new society which Albania wishes to build is based on the democratic principles of respect for human rights, respect for the primacy of law and multi-party democracy.

7. Respect for human rights has been, and still remains, one of the chief concerns of the Albanian Government since its establishment following the elections of 22 March 1992, which brought to power the democratic forces of society. The problems relating to human rights are regarded as forming an integral part of the ongoing political, economic and social reforms. In the new legislative context which has been formulated and continues to be put in place, it is stated that respect for human rights constitutes one of the

fundamental principles of political and social organization in Albania. The legislative context which protects these rights and condemnation of violations of these rights constitute a valuable achievement which creates the possibility of making further progress. Article 2 of Constitutional Act No. 7,491 of 29 April 1992 relating to the principal provisions of the Constitution, which is in force until enactment of the new Constitution - a draft of which has been submitted to Parliament for consideration, states: 'The dignity of man, his rights and freedoms, the free development of his personality, the constitutional order, equality before the law, social justice and the multi-party system constitute the foundations of this State, which has an obligation to respect them and to protect them'. This new legal instrument affirms that the primacy of law constitutes one of the fundamental principles of the organization of society, which is a further guarantee for the building of an advanced democratic society based on respect for the law. After affirming the principle of the separation of powers, this Act stipulates that: 'the activity of the State shall be exercised by the organs of the State recognized by the law', while article 6 of the Act provides that the political parties 'shall be completely independent of the State'. This will help to eliminate the possibility of usurpation of power by a State-sponsored party, as occurred under the communist regime.

8. It is further stated that the form of government in Albania is parliamentary democracy. The multi-party system is regarded as a fundamental condition for democracy and the will of the people constitutes the foundations of power. Thus, article 1 of the Act relating to the principal provisions of the Constitution states: 'Albania is a parliamentary republic. National sovereignty originates from the people and is vested in the people'. Article 3 of the Act provides that the referendum is one of the means by which the people participate in the political life of the country, stipulating specifically that: 'the people shall exercise its power by means of its representative organs, and through the exercise of the referendum'.

9. It should be noted that considerable efforts have been made to put these principles into practice.

Results of the reforms

(a) The primacy of law

Development of the legislative framework

10. The process of reform of social organization in Albania and the construction of a democratic society could not be achieved within the context of the old legislative structure. For this reason, the building and establishment of a new legislative structure capable of supporting the process of reform constitute an important achievement in the construction of a democratic and pluralist society.

11. Many laws have been amended and several others have been formulated and ratified. Thus, several amendments have been made to the legislation concerning the death penalty, which has been abolished for women and persons under the age of 18, and concerning the reintroduction of rehabilitation, conditional release and many other criminal procedures.

12. The text of the new constitution has been prepared in accordance with the principles of a democratic society and with the assistance of many foreign experts. A special chapter of the text deals with human rights and fundamental freedoms. Ratification of the text will undoubtedly create an essential, adequate and important framework for the development of the democratic process and respect for human rights.

13. Other draft legislation, such as the Status of Journalists Bill and the Religious Communities Bill, is in the course of preparation and will shortly be submitted to Parliament for consideration.

Reorganization of the judiciary

14. The reform of the system of judicial institutions has constituted an important element of the State's activity in restructuring the national institutional framework. The efforts made to this end have already yielded good results, such as the overall reorganization of the existing judicial institutions, the re-establishment and functioning of the Ministry of Justice (whose activity was suspended from 1963-1990), progress in the area of impartiality and the independence of the organs of justice, etc. Act No. 7,574 of 24 June 1992 relating to the organization of justice and amendments to the Codes of Penal and Civil Procedure clearly determines the competence of judges, prosecutors and pre-trial bodies, thereby conferring a legitimate character on their activities. Article 5 of the Constitutional Act states: 'Judicial authority shall be exercised by the organs of justice, which shall be independent and refer only to the authority of the law'.

15. It should, however, be noted that, in its efforts to permit the independent functioning of the organs of justice, our country has encountered certain difficulties and a number of serious obstacles, such as the non-existence of properly qualified personnel to ensure the functioning of the organs of justice, the inexperience of recently employed personnel and the absence of a tradition of impartiality among the judiciary. These difficulties are having an adverse effect on the restructuring of the organs of justice and their independent functioning. It should, however, be stated that the reorganization of the system of organs of justice is already at an acceptable level.

Improvement of the administration of the State

16. Another important aspect of the reform of the institutional structures has been the establishment of a new administration whose activity is based on the relevant laws. To this end, the Act on the depoliticization of certain organs of the State gives effect to article 6 on the Act relating to the principal provisions of the Constitution, which forbids political party activity in the organs of the State administration and in the organs of justice. More precisely, this Act prohibits activity by the parties or political organizations or associations in the departments, enterprises or military institutions of the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Public Order, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in diplomatic mission abroad, in the Ministry of Justice, in the organs of the administration of justice,

in the Albanian news agency and radio and television stations, and in the organs of power and local administration. The enforcement of this Act was of particular importance in the context of the activity of the organs of justice and the organs of public order.

17. The restructuring of the organs for the maintenance of public order has been another subject of concern of the Albanian Government in the context of the reorganization of the administration of the State. The main objective of the efforts made in this area has been the introduction of legislation aimed at governing the activity of these organs with due concern for observance of the law and respect for human dignity. The Forces of Law and Order Act aims precisely at this end. It should be added that this new organization of the forces of law and order has been of particular importance in the maintenance of public order. However, it should also be noted that there have been a number of difficulties and obstacles to overcome, such as the absence of qualified personnel and facilities. Albania has declared its willingness to accept any technical assistance in this area. With this in mind, it has already greatly expanded its contacts with many international organizations and is maintaining increasingly close relations with them by organizing a growing number of exchanges of experience, seminars, etc.

Democratic institutions

18. The process of establishing democratic institutions has been a difficult one, but some success is being achieved at the present time.

19. The elections held on 22 March 1992, the first genuinely free elections, led to the establishment of a multi-party Parliament, with seats held by five parties: the Democratic Party (the majority party), the Socialist Party, the Social Democrat Party, the Republican Party and the Union for Human Rights Party. This multi-party system means that Parliament has become a major instrument in furthering the new democracy.

20. In regard to the organization and establishment of democratic institutions, the separation of powers has been yet another major achievement in the functioning of a State governed by the rule of law. This separation is set out in the Constitutional Act, in which article 3 affirms that 'the fundamental principle of the organization of the State is the separation of the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary'.

21. The establishment of the Constitutional Court of the Republic is another important advance, as it guarantees strict observance of the law and lawful activity by the State. Ever since its establishment, the Constitutional Court has considered a number of issues and played an important role in interpreting the law and eliminating violations of the Constitutional Act.

22. Progress has also been made in creating a system of institutions and organizations for the protection of human rights. The Parliamentary Human Rights Commission and the Albanian Helsinki Committee are undoubtedly notable achievements, particularly since the democratic process in Albania has been under way for only a short period. The Albanian Government is now making efforts to set up the institution of an ombudsman, which it regards as an important part of the requisite means for protecting human rights.

23. The reorganization of the local authorities is a special factor in the process of democratizing institutions. The local authorities, established after free elections and on the basis of democratic principles, have replaced the previous local authorities, which simply existed as a matter of form and were wholly dependent on the central authorities. The law containing some amendments to Act No. 4,791 laid the foundations for the new local authorities. Article 3 of the Act states that 'the local authorities shall be organized and shall operate in accordance with the principles of self-government, independence and decentralization'. Article 4 of Act No. 7,572 states that 'problems of special importance to a particular administrative unit may be solved by a referendum in which all inhabitants of that unit entitled to vote may participate'.

(b) Multi-party democracy

The multi-party system and non-governmental organizations

24. The introduction of multi-party politics in 1990 was an important victory for the forces of democracy in Albania. This method of organizing political life is now safeguarded by the Constitutional Act, which states that 'multi-party politics is one of the prerequisites of democracy in Albania', and is regarded as the most suitable way of building a genuinely democratic society.

25. It should be emphasized that a large number of political, religious and cultural organizations and associations operate in Albania. They can be established by a simple procedure, provided their programme is lawful and their activities do not conflict with the Constitution and the law. It should be noted that this is not a restriction on freedom of association, for registration of parties and organizations is a straightforward procedure that consists in verifying whether the by-laws are in conformity with the laws and the Constitution. There are approximately 26 political parties in Albania and they freely participate in the country's political life.

26. Free, democratic elections are a constant safeguard of democracy. The Constitutional Act guarantees free elections by universal and equal suffrage and direct, secret ballot.

27. The elections held on 22 March 1990 marked a victory for the forces of democracy and a decisive move by Albania on the path to democracy. The elections in July 1992 led to the establishment of pluralist local authorities.

B. Human rights situation

28. Since 1990, when a multi-party political system was introduced in Albania, great strides have been taken in regard to human rights. Human dignity, the rights and freedoms of the individual, the development of his personality and equality before the law are viewed as the basic principles of the State, which is required to observe and foster them. The law guarantees equality for all. Legislation has been amended and is being further supplemented in keeping with international human rights standards.

The situation of political prisoners

29. The number of political prisoners in Albania has been considerable. There has been an even larger number of deportees, above all among the relatives of political prisoners. In 1991, all political prisoners in Albania were released, and this was a major step in re-establishing social justice and restoring the rights of these persons. At the present time, the main objective is to reintegrate them completely into society and to create favourable conditions for this purpose. However, many difficulties and problems have emerged. The lengthy time they have spent in prison - in most cases more than 10 years - and the deportation of their relatives, sometimes as much as 40 years ago, have caused serious difficulties in moving them back into their old homes.

30. The Government has paid special attention to solving this problem by establishing a special ministry, the Ministry of Labour, Emigration, Social Welfare and Political Persecutees. The most difficult problem at this time is to house them. Act No. 7,598 of 1 September 1992 created a State-budgeted special fund to meet the most urgent needs of former political prisoners and persecutees. A number of decrees have created facilities to find them work and set up training courses. They have now been rehabilitated and declared innocent, and this will help to bring about their gradual social reintegration. Nevertheless, it must be recognized that their living conditions are still difficult, and humanitarian assistance has not been sufficient to meet their needs.

Civil and political rights

The right to life, liberty and security of person

31. The law safeguards security of person and guarantees the right to life and liberty. Albanian law clearly states that no one may be arrested, tried or convicted arbitrarily. Persons who have been arrested or charged with an offence are entitled to appeal to the competent legal bodies in connection with the acts in question. Albanian law specifies that no one may be convicted for anything not considered in law as a criminal act. The law guarantees persons charged with an offence the right to qualified counsel from the very outset of the proceedings, and prohibits the use of force, torture or any other form of violence on persons under arrest. The use of torture is in itself a criminal act punishable by law.

32. Another breakthrough in this field has been the introduction of a statute of limitations that ranges from 5 to 20 years, depending on the gravity of the criminal offence.

33. Important changes have been made in criminal law in regard to the death penalty, which is prohibited in the case of persons under 18 years of age and women. Up to 1990, the death penalty was applicable for 34 different offenses; it is now possible for 11 offenses that are regarded as very serious and as a threat to society. The instances in which the death penalty applies

are still numerous, but this is a temporary situation and relates to the particular conditions in Albania and the difficult period of transition. However, Act No. 7,491 provides that the President of the Republic is entitled to quash a death sentence and to replace it with 25 years' imprisonment.

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

34. A number of measures have been taken to guarantee these fundamental freedoms. Current legislation guarantees everyone the right to freedom of thought and freedom to express his ideas. No one may be convicted for his ideas.

35. Albanian citizens have an opportunity to express their ideas both in their daily lives and in the press and other media. In this connection, the establishment of a free press has been a major victory in Albania's efforts to build a democratic society. To date, there have been about 200 different newspapers in Albania, but it has to be acknowledged that the shortage of paper and other technical and financial difficulties are such that a number of these newspapers no longer appear or are not published on a regular basis.

36. Constitutional Act No. 4,791 also provides for a referendum on issues of national importance; this is a direct expression of opinion by the public on a particular matter. A referendum can also be held by the people living in a particular administrative unit. Persons are guaranteed an opportunity to receive and exchange information, and they also receive information on radio and television.

37. Religious belief is regarded as a matter of personal conscience. No one can be convicted on the grounds of his religious belief or for practising a religion, and everyone is entitled to receive and spread religious information. 'The State', Act No. 4,791 stipulates, 'shall respect freedom of religion and create suitable conditions for the practice of religion'. There are three religions in Albania: Muslim, Catholic and Orthodox. Persons are free to practise these religions. There is a large number of mosques and churches, but not all of them are open, the reason being the cost.

Freedom of assembly and freedom to demonstrate peacefully

38. Albanian citizens enjoy the right to freedom of assembly and freedom to demonstrate in public places. The decree on meetings, assemblies and demonstrations in public places sets out the legal rules for holding meetings, assemblies and demonstrations. It is a law that simply prohibits demonstrations, meetings or assemblies in public places when calls are issued for rebellion and undermine the prestige and authority of the State or endanger public safety or the life and health of citizens, or again when the participants make use of passwords, emblems, symbols or other images with an anti-people, racist or fascist content that constitutes incitement to hatred. The police take all the necessary precautions for meetings, assemblies or demonstrations to be held in public places peacefully and in accordance with the law.

Freedom to join a political party

39. Albanian citizens are free to join political organizations and parties. The right to form various political, economic or other associations, provided their programmes and activities are consistent with the law, is guaranteed.

40. The right to form political parties is safeguarded by the Constitutional Act, which states that 'political parties and other organizations shall be formed and shall engage in their activities in accordance with the law. They shall be separate from the State'. Act No. 7,502 of 25 July 1991, on political parties, regulates the way in which political parties are formed. A party is lawfully formed and registered with the Ministry of Justice, which simply examines whether or not the party's by-laws and programme are in conformity with the law. Furthermore, the law stipulates that political parties are entitled to appeal to the Court of Cassation against any decision by the Minister of Justice denying lawful formation of a party.

41. An issue that has met with some reaction has been an article of the Act which prohibits the formation of parties on 'religious, ethnic or regional grounds'. The purpose of this prohibition is not to discriminate against individuals or to restrict their freedoms. It is a response to the tense situation at the present time and we are of the opinion that, with the democratization of Albania, the conditions will be met for the necessary steps to be taken. Nevertheless, a large number of political parties have been formed and operate in Albania and abroad. Members of minorities also participate in these parties.

The Right to vote, the right to stand for election and the right to hold public office

42. Constitutional Act No. 7,491 guarantees free, universal and equal suffrage, by direct, secret ballot. Under the terms of Act No. 7,556 of 4 February 1992, on elections to the National Assembly, 'all Albanian citizens who, on the day of the elections, have reached 18 years of age are entitled to vote, without any discrimination as to race, national origin, sex, wealth or social status'. Citizens can be deprived of the right to vote only by a court ruling; this also applies to mentally retarded persons, classed as such by a court. The law expressly stipulates that everyone has an equal vote. Anybody who has reached 21 years of age is entitled to stand for election as a representative of a political party, a party group or an independent candidate. By law, representatives of party groups and persons not belonging to a party may participate in electoral boards. The law also guarantees electoral campaigning by affording all party groups and all citizens the opportunity to canvass freely at meetings, on the radio, on television, in the press and in the other media. Appeals may be made against acts and decisions of electoral boards. The law also provides for participation by foreign observers at elections. Furthermore, Albanian legislation guarantees citizens the right to hold administrative posts, without distinction as to national origin, race, sex or social status.

Freedom of movement, including the right to leave one's own country and to return to it; freedom to choose one's domicile

43. Albanian law guarantees freedom of movement. Any Albanian national, irrespective of race, national origin, colour, sex, language, social status and so on, enjoys the right to travel abroad, whether for official, health or personal reasons. This right does not apply to persons who have not yet reached the age of 16 (except when they are accompanied by their parents), persons physically unable to travel, persons convicted of a criminal offence or against whom proceedings have been instituted, persons with financial obligations towards the State or towards other individuals, or persons who have not done military service. To travel abroad, persons must have a passport and a visa for the country they are visiting. The procedure is straightforward and inexpensive. The number of Albanians travelling abroad for various reasons has risen over the past two years. However, problems still exist, and this means that there is an even more urgent need for bilateral agreements to be concluded between Albania and other countries.

44. The law also permits dual nationality for anyone who so wishes, and recognizes the right to renounce Albanian citizenship and to apply for Albanian nationality. Albanian citizens who have left their country are entitled to return, without need of an entry visa.

45. There are no restrictions on movement inside Albania. All persons are guaranteed the right freely to choose their domicile and simply have to carry out a few formalities which do not affect or restrict this right.

Economic, social and cultural rights

46. The Government has been making and continues to make, efforts to promote the realization of the economic and social rights of its citizens. The realization of economic and social rights is closely linked to Albania's current difficult economic situation.

The right to work, remuneration and adequate working conditions; the right to holidays

47. All citizens aged over 15 are entitled to work. The implementation of the economic reform has led to a rise in the number of unemployed. The private sector is still weak and unable to employ all the available labour. Act No. 7,521 of 30 October 1991 guarantees social security for those who have become unemployed as a result of the introduction of the reform, and for the destitute.

48. The law recognizes the right of employed persons to remuneration. The Government has introduced measures to mitigate the consequences of the economic reform and as far as possible to solve problems of remuneration, and focuses particular attention on eliminating the considerable disproportion between public and private-sector wages.

49. Working conditions are not satisfactory, particularly in mines, where they are arduous. Efforts have been made to improve working conditions to the extent that financial and physical circumstances allow.

50. Legislation guarantees workers one day's leave a week and 15 to 26 days' leave a year. Pregnant women are afforded special protection. They are guaranteed suitable employment during their pregnancy and 12 months' paid leave.

The right to form trade unions and the right to strike

51. Albanian legislation authorizes the establishment of trade unions, and allows them to join and cooperate with international trade union organizations. There are at present a number of trade unions in Albania whose efforts centre on improving the working conditions and remuneration of workers.

52. The 1991 Decree on the Right to Strike established the right of workers in Albania to strike. Under this Decree, it is the trade unions or the authorized representative of the workers' association who may organize and declare a strike. The aim of the strike must be to improve working conditions, remuneration, social security or other work-related matters. A strike is legitimate provided proper procedure has been followed with regard to the declaration of the strike and the nature of the demands. The law also imposes a number of restrictions on the right to strike, whose purpose is to avoid any situations that might entail difficulties for the country as a whole or for specific sectors.

The right to social security

53. Albanian legislation guarantees the right of citizens to social security. The State Social Security Act guarantees the right of workers who reach a specific age to a pension. The Social Security Institute was established by special decision of the Government and entrusted with 'the uniform management, organization and supervision of implementation of the Act in the sphere of social security for workers, employees and private individuals, regardless of their type of organization.'

54. The State also guarantees the right of access to the various health services. However, the health institutions are in a difficult situation, marked in particular by a shortage of medicines and facilities, despite international humanitarian assistance.

The right to education

55. The right to education of all citizens, regardless of their nationality, race, sex or social status, is recognized by law. The State guarantees free education and primary education is compulsory. Albania possesses a comprehensive educational system: citizens may follow primary, secondary and higher studies. The Government has paid particular attention to ensuring that the whole population can have a decent education. There are numerous primary and secondary schools, and five universities. Particular attention is devoted to postgraduate studies for students who complete their higher education. During the difficult transition period in Albania, the development of education is also facing difficulties and problems, the lack of textbooks being especially acute.

56. The development of culture is of particular concern to the Government. The establishment of cultural institutions, such as cultural centres, libraries and museums, and the organization of national and local cultural activities have contributed to this goal.

57. Material support, which is insufficient in Albania, is necessary in order to ensure the satisfactory realization of the economic, social and cultural rights of citizens.

The situation of minorities in Albania

58. The establishment of democratic processes in Albania has created favourable conditions for closer examination of the problems of its minorities. Since the fall of communism in 1990, Albania has declared its determination to move towards construction of a democratic society based on respect for human rights, and in this connection it has undertaken to observe and implement the international standards relating to the rights of members of national minorities.

59. Albania has also stated its intention to do its utmost to meet, without any form of discrimination, all its commitments deriving from the International Human Rights Covenants. This also applies to members of the minorities living in Albania. The Constitutional Act states that Albania recognizes and respects the international standards relating to the rights of members of minorities and places all Albanian citizens, including members of minorities, on an equal footing. Thus, the members of minorities now enjoy the same rights as other Albanian citizens.

60. They are free to practise their religion, to have their own religious articles, to impart or receive information and to receive a religious education.

61. They may also freely use their mother tongue, and are given every possibility of maintaining, preserving and developing their ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious identity. The State has undertaken to establish favourable conditions for them fully to enjoy their rights. There are now many cultural institutions, libraries and information centres in Albania where members of minorities may use and develop their mother tongue. In addition, they have the right to be educated in their mother tongue. There is already such a pre-school and junior school educational system. For example, in the district of Gjirokastra, a region where a number of villages are inhabited by members of the Greek minority, 964 pupils are currently receiving primary education in Greek; there are 67 teachers, 54 of whom have completed a Greek-speaking teacher training course, and six senior teachers who have completed their studies at the Pedagogical Training Institute for junior school teachers. It should also be mentioned that there is a professorship in Greek at the University of Gjirokastra.

62. Members of minorities enjoy full political and civil rights. They take an active and direct part in Albanian politics by means of free elections, referenda and the political parties. They have their own political associations and organizations, such as, for example, the Omonia association,

which is active throughout virtually the whole country. The Union for Human Rights Party represents a majority of the Greek minorities, and at the most recent parliamentary elections it won two seats. Minorities are also involved in a number of cultural associations currently in existence in Albania.

63. Another feature of the realization of the rights of members of minorities is their representation in local bodies and institutions, where they are able to express their wishes through their representatives. They are thus able to play a considerable part in organizing social and economic life, especially in the regions where they live.

64. The members of minorities in Albania enjoy economic and social rights without discrimination. Like all other Albanian citizens, they enjoy the right to work and to fair remuneration, and the right of access to public services and health services. And like other Albanian citizens, they enjoy the State-guaranteed right to welfare and social security.

65. Naturally, Albania's very low level of development does not enable members of minorities to enjoy their economic and social rights to the full; however, it should be pointed out that no discrimination is practised against them on account of their ethnic, linguistic or religious identity.

66. Albania is determined to fulfil its commitments under the International Covenants to which it has acceded, and is prepared to accede to the other principal international human rights instruments. This is clearly demonstrated by its openness towards the outside world and by the intensification of its human rights activities over the past two years. More particularly, it has established closer relations with the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, the Council of Europe and the organs that deal with the human dimension within the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

67. Clearly, during this period of political and economic transition, Albania is encountering difficulties and obstacles to the building of democracy and the realization of human rights. The absence of a democratic tradition of respect for human rights, the lack of experience and of qualified personnel capable of developing modern legislation, and the difficult economic circumstances are some of the main problems and obstacles facing Albania in its efforts to build a genuinely democratic society. For this reason, cooperation between Albania and the international community in this sphere is of unquestionable importance."

II. ADVISORY AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES OF THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

68. In resolution 1992/69, the Commission on Human Rights "Welcomes the conclusion, on 13 February 1992, of the Agreement on technical cooperation between the Centre for Human Rights and the United Nations Fund for Advisory Services and Technical Assistance in the field of Human Rights, on the one hand, and the Government of Albania, on the other."

69. In the report of the Secretary-General to the forty-ninth session of the Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/1993/61) concerning advisory services in the field of human rights, paragraphs 152 to 156 describe the activities of the Centre for Human Rights in the context of cooperation with the Government of Albania during 1992. In particular, in Tirana from 2 to 6 November 1992, the Centre organized an intensive training course for 60 Albanian police, prison and military officers. During the course, international experts discussed with participants international human rights standards in the sphere of the administration of justice and a number of practical techniques for law enforcement in accordance with human rights. In addition, from 2 to 12 November 1992, the Centre carried out a human rights needs assessment mission in Albania. The mission was undertaken in the context of the above-mentioned Agreement.